

# Working It Out

An interactive resource for pre-service teachers, teachers and other professionals working with young people about homophobia and transphobia in schools

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An interactive resource for pre-service teachers, teachers and other professionals working with young people about homophobia and transphobia in schools

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## Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre

The Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre is an Australian-based, international research centre that unites young people with researchers, practitioners, innovators and policy-makers from over 70 partner organisations. Together, we explore the role of technology in young people's lives, and how it can be used to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 12 to 25. The Young and Well CRC is established under the Australian Government's Cooperative Research Centres Program.

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# Introduction

## What is this resource and who should use it?

Working It Out includes: a performed ethnography (play); a facilitator's guide; and questions that promote critical discussion and reflection with participants.

It is designed to be used by academics with pre-service teachers undertaking teaching degrees and in professional development courses for teachers and other in-school professionals (counsellors, psychologists, nurses etc.).

The objective is to open up critical discussions around homophobia and transphobia in order to enhance participants' knowledge, skills development and reflective practice.

## How was the play developed?

A performed ethnography is a play script devised from ethnographic data gathered from research. This information is then incorporated into a storyline.

*Working It Out* was developed using qualitative and quantitative research that was collected as part of the *Growing up Queer* study undertaken by academics at Western Sydney University and funded by the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre.

For information about the study, see *Growing up Queer: Issues facing young Australians who are gender variant and sexuality diverse* at <https://www.youngandwellcrc.org.au/homophobia-transphobia-linked-mental-health-issues-many-growing-queer/>

The research was conducted in partnership with Twenty10 Incorporating GLCS NSW (Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service NSW). Twenty10 Incorporating GLCS NSW is a community-based, non-profit, state-wide organisation that works with and supports people of diverse genders, sexes and sexualities, their families and communities.

The research included:

- A national survey with young people aged 16-27 who identify as gender and sexuality diverse
- Focus groups/interactive workshops with young gender and sexuality diverse people who were attending Twenty10
- Interviews with professionals working with these young people at Twenty10.

The concerns raised in the play reflect the most pertinent and common issues and experiences related to homophobia and transphobia for the young people who participated in our research.

## How can the resource be used?

As well as being used as part of a broad approach to addressing homophobia and transphobia in schools with teaching and support staff, the play can also be used for informing:

- Policy development and revision
- Encouraging and supporting staff to take up further education in this area
- Implementing supported reading groups
- Incorporating gender and sexuality diversity into the curriculum.

Examples:

- Pre-service training:

*An academic in a Faculty of Education who teaches pre-service primary and secondary school teachers wants students to have the knowledge and skills to respond to issues raised in the play. The academic uses a two-hour seminar with students in a diversity/health unit to critically discuss homophobia, transphobia and the skills required to respond in a school setting. The two hours allows for the play reading, facilitated discussion using the critical questions and for participants to suggest and share strategies.*

- In-service training:

*The School Counsellor is receiving complaints from students and teachers concerning homophobia and transphobia. These include: students using homophobic and transphobic language and expressions; a gender diverse student being bullied by peers; and a lack of teacher intervention in related incidents. After a staff meeting, the Principal and Head of Welfare decide to use Working It Out with staff before the next term. A professional facilitator leads the session and the discussion in order to provide an objective, impartial viewpoint and create a non-judgmental environment that encourages all staff to speak up.*

### What is the process?

1. Pre-performance reading: Prior to the session, the internal or external facilitator should read the play at least once so they are familiar with the story, characters and issues. They also need to become familiar with the critical questions and associated issues so they can direct participants back to the play for examples.
2. Performance: The play can be read or performed. In most professional development contexts, the play is read aloud with individuals taking on the various roles. If the play is to be performed, it can be adapted for the stage. The use of scenery and props is not prescriptive. The play has been written as a holistic performance that tells a story, highlights issues from different points of view and communicates important messages. It will be most effective if it is performed in its entirety, with no scenes or characters omitted. If time is an issue, the play can be split over two or more sessions. The facilitator assists with casting roles; reads the stage directions aloud if required; and leads critical discussion of the issues raised by the play. Before the reading/performance begins, each participant reads aloud the character description provided so everyone is familiar with their character's context.
3. Critical questions: Depending on the time available, the facilitator can stop the play reading at critical points (for example, the end of each scene) then use the questions to prompt discussion. If there is less time available, the facilitator can wait until the play reading has finished then use the questions as prompts to open up discussion. It is important for the facilitator to draw links between what is happening in the play and participants' experience of their current, past or future educational settings and contexts. This provides an excellent opportunity for them to discuss similar issues in their own setting/context, to reflect on their practice and to share helpful pedagogical approaches and strategies.

# WORKING IT OUT

## CHARACTERS

### STUDENTS

LAUREN MIGGINS	Identifies as lesbian and Anglo-Australian and attends Treetop Hills. She is romantically involved with Jess Wong. Lauren is a competent student who is generally well-liked by her peers and teachers. She is on the School Representative Council and is passionate about social causes, without being seen as extremist.
JESSICA "JESS" WONG	An Anglo-Chinese, gender diverse student who attends St Pope's. He is romantically involved with Lauren. Jess's parents are unaware of their child's preferred gender and the relationship with Lauren. Jess has to manage the tension between his preferred gender and his parent's expectations of him as the eldest 'girl' in the family.
DAN PEARSON	Identifies as Aboriginal Australian and gay and attends Treetop Hills. He is open about his sexuality with close friends only but other students frequently direct homophobic abuse at him. He has a supportive single mum who is socially engaged and politically active around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and queer issues.
JAY BENGA	A student at Treetop Hills who excels at football. He is dating a popular sporty girl in his year. Jay is openly homophobic but secretly questioning his sexuality. He is a Pacific Islander from a Christian family and is strongly engaged in the church community.
AMANDA JOHNSON	A student at Treetop Hills.
MATTHEW NYUGEN	A student at Treetop Hills.

SONIA CAMPISI            A student at Treetop Hills.  
STANLEY PETERS        A student at Treetop Hills.  
LINDA O'SHEA           A student at Treetop Hills.  
JUSTIN CAMPBELL        A student at Treetop Hills.

## **TEACHERS**

ZOE KOSTAS            A new Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDPHE) teacher who has been appointed mid-term to Treetop Hills. She is in her 30s, dynamic and keeps up with professional development and new and emerging research. She has a Masters in Sexual Health. Zoe is a Greek-Australian who draws on the strict gender conformity and orthodox religion of her own childhood to counteract stereotypes and promote diversity.

ANTHONY BISHARA      A PDPHE teacher who has taught at Treetop Hills for three years. He is in his late 20s, coaches the school all-male football team and is popular with sporty students. He is a Lebanese Australian who has managed his personal experiences of racism but has little experience or knowledge of other forms of discrimination.

ELSIE PETERSEN        A geography teacher who has taught at Treetop Hills for 15 years. She is in her 50s, well-meaning, and is concerned about young people learning too much about sex - especially non-heterosexual sex - when they are "too young". While she has her own views, she is willing to listen to those of others.

PAUL SANDERS         An English Teacher at Treetop Hills. He addresses gender and sexuality issues when teaching texts that are



part of the English syllabus.

OZNUR BAKIR

A French teacher at Treetop Hills. Oznur comes from a Muslim family background and is sensitive to the stereotypes and discrimination that prevail around Muslims, especially Muslim women. Her sensitivity extends to other minorities, including those who are gender and sexuality diverse.

LIN KEE

A science teacher at Treetop Hills and is Deputy Principal. She is supportive of comprehensive and inclusive sexuality education for young people in schools. Lin teaches the students Biology, including reproduction, but is concerned that they are not receiving a relevant broader education around sexuality education in the PDHPE curriculum.

DAVID ALLEN

The Principal of Treetop Hills. He is in his 50s and aims to make the school a better place for all students. He is Anglo-Celtic Australian and grew up in the area. He is very connected to the school and to offering students possibilities to transform their lives.

SUSAN TATE

The Principal of St Pope's. She is in her 50s and concerned for the well-being of her students. She is also concerned about the public perception of her school and its reputation. Susan is of British decent, Anglican and recruited from overseas to lead the school. She has been in Australia for five years.

LINDA O'SHEA

A student at Treetop Hills.

JUSTIN CAMPBELL

A student at Treetop Hills.

## **FAMILY MEMBERS**

NOLA PEARSON

Dan Pearson's mother. She is a single parent who has an amicable relationship with her ex-husband. She is a registered nurse and an experienced midwife. She is accepting of her son's sexuality and very supportive. She has been politically and socially active for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights and is also involved with Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG).

GEOFF MIGGINS

Lauren Miggins' father. When it comes to his daughter's school performance, he is supportive and concerned. There is no indication he realises that their daughter identifies as lesbian and this is not something that has been openly discussed at home. It is possible they have private concerns. They want their daughter to do well at school and get a good job.

ALISON MIGGINS

Lauren Miggins' mother. When it comes to her daughter's school performance, she is supportive and concerned. There is no indication she realises that their daughter identifies as lesbian and this is not something that has been openly discussed at home. It is possible they have private concerns. They want their daughter to do well at school and get a good job.

## SETTING

### SCHOOLS

#### TREETOP HILLS HIGH SCHOOL

A co-educational government school situated in a diverse Local Government Area (LGA) where 85 different languages are represented. It is a multicultural Year 7-12 High School with a population of approximately 800 students, 70% of whom are from language backgrounds other than English.

#### ST. POPE'S COLLEGE

All-girls, Anglican private high school in the same LGA as Treetop Hills. While it has a cultural mixture of students, it is not as diverse as Treetop Hills. Not all students who attend the school are from religious families but it is a requirement that all staff members (including the Principal) are Anglican.

ACT I  
SCENE 1

SETTING                      On a street corner one block from  
Treetop Hills High School and three  
blocks from St Pope's College. There  
is a large hedge nearby. JESS and  
LAUREN are wearing school uniform -  
skirts, blouses and blazers.

JESS WONG

I was hoping you might be able to cut my hair a bit shorter  
again this afternoon.

LAUREN MIGGINS

Yeah, sure. The hairdresser hasn't done a bad job this time  
though.

JESS WONG

It's still a bit girly.

LAUREN MIGGINS

Especially around the side-burns...

(Smiles at JESS)

But we can fix that, no problem!

JESS WONG

(Shows LAUREN a photo from a magazine in his back  
pack)

This is how I want to look.

LAUREN MIGGINS

That guy's a marine! You'd look hot but I think your parents  
would notice.

JESS WONG

Yeah, but my hair's the only thing I can control!

LAUREN MIGGINS

But what about your teachers and the girls at school? It's bad enough already. They would totally lose it if you had that haircut.

JESS WONG

I'm sick of people calling me names and spreading rumours about me. Last week some of the girls snapped my bra strap to check that I've got boobs! Now I've started binding my chest, they won't be able to do it.

LAUREN MIGGINS

That's awful...

JESS WONG

Yeah. Some of the teachers exclude me too. I'm an 'a' student but I'd never get chosen to be prefect or a house captain or anything.

LAUREN MIGGINS

Well, there are some unsupportive students and teachers where I am. But there are some really cool ones too. I guess it's the same with all schools - some teachers are cool and accepting and others are kind of prejudiced or ignorant. I hope I get chosen to be house captain - my parents would love that!

JESS WONG

I hope you get picked too.

LAUREN MIGGINS

I don't think the teachers at my school know I'm a lesbian so they can't use that against me.

JESS WONG

I can't stand this girls' uniform any longer - I really hate it! At least if I went to your school I could wear shirts or shorts or long pants. I don't want to dress like a girl. It doesn't feel right. It's not who I am.

LAUREN MIGGINS

I love you no matter what you wear!

(Smiles at JESS then hugs him from behind)

It's so confusing! I was just getting my head around being a lesbian, but now you're my boyfriend, I'm not sure what I am any more. Maybe I don't have to come out to my parents now. It's a shame I can't talk to anybody about how I feel - apart from you, of course. Imagine if we could talk about these things at school - if it was just normal.

JESS WONG

I mean, I've heard teachers talking about lesbians and gay people, but it's always the same old stuff about equity and discrimination, and nothing about how you can be queer and have a happy life. And there's nothing at all about safe sex unless you're straight.

LAUREN MIGGINS

And we never learn about trans people or people like you who are questioning their gender. If we hadn't seen that documentary and googled stuff, we never would've found that information and support...

(Pause)

Jess, do you think I'm still a lesbian?

JESS WONG

You can be whoever you want to be, and I'm cool with that. I know I'm a guy. I feel like a guy and I want to look like a guy all the time. But you don't have to call yourself anything.

LAUREN MIGGINS

It's just that I now you've changed what you think about yourself and I don't know if I'm ready. It's all really hard at the moment.

JESS WONG

Well, yeah, it's hard for me too. I know my parents are ashamed of me because mum tries to make me wear girly dresses whenever family or friends come round. My brothers get to wear what I want to wear but I'm expected to do the right thing

because I'm the eldest. And then they're always talking about the kind of guy I should marry, like a doctor. I keep saying it's not going to happen but we just keep fighting. I hate it. It would be much easier to just live somewhere else.

LAUREN MIGGINS

I'm sorry jess. All that fighting must be terrible. I want to be a social worker so that I can help families work through these kind of problems. Do you think your parents would accept me as a social worker and not a doctor?

JESS WONG

No, because you're a girl! It wouldn't help if you were a doctor. They wouldn't understand that I don't want to be a girl but I do want to be with one.

LAUREN MIGGINS

But we could be together if they didn't know. We could leave home and move to the city.

JESS WONG

But what about school? We can't just move out...

LAUREN MIGGINS

Maybe I should speak to my new health teacher Ms. Kostas. She's really cool and might have advice for us. Or you could come live with me? I could speak to mum, I don't have to tell her everything.

JESS WONG

I'd really like to live at your place. But what would your parents think? Your place is pretty small. I don't want to be another problem for them.

LAUREN MIGGINS

You'd just have to stay in my room. Problem solved!

JESS WONG

Do you really think your parents would let us share a room? That would be awesome!

Maybe you should talk to Dan when you get to school. His mum is cool with him being gay, right? He might have some ideas about what we can do.

LAUREN MIGGINS

Yeah, good idea.

(LAUREN and JESS move behind the hedge to kiss and then walk in separate directions to their respective schools)

(END OF SCENE)



ACT I  
SCENE 2

SETTING                      Teacher's staff room at Treetop Hills  
High School.

ELSIE PETERSON

Have you heard the students talking about Zoe's sex education classes? Some of them were saying they're learning that different kinds of intimate relationships are okay. It was clear that different meant gay! And I think there was something about transvestites - or is it transsexuals? I don't know if we should we be encouraging this sort of thing. They're really impressionable at this age.

ANTHONY BISHARA

I definitely don't teach that stuff in my class. I'm all for tolerance but I'm not going to teach these kids how to be gay or cross-dressers. It's difficult enough teaching sex education. The less detail the better, I reckon. What would I know about teaching gay stuff anyway? It's not like I have any first-hand experience!

LIN KEE

I think we have a responsibility to teach the students about different relationships. Sexual health is no different to learning why it's important to eat well and exercise. I teach reproduction in biology, but I'm relying on the Phys Ed and Health curriculum and teachers to address gender and sexual diversity and safe sex practices. After all, we don't know which students might need this information.

ANTHONY BISHARA

I think we do know the students who might need this information! I mean, come on - everybody has heard the rumours about Dan Pearson. I'm surprised he's gay. He's pretty good on the football field - nearly as good as Jay Benga. Those Pacific Islander boys make great forwards.

PAUL SANDERS

If I hear that stereotype one more time of the gay man who isn't good at sport or the lesbian who's too good at sport...

OZNUR BAKIR

...That boys who dress in women's clothes will turn into a drag queen or that tomboys will become a lesbian... They're as bad as the assumption that any Muslim woman who wears a hijab can't possibly be a feminist...

ANTHONY BISHARA

But you're very progressive for a Muslim woman Oznur! You're certainly more out there than my Christian Lebanese family. If I'd turned out gay, I'd have been chucked out of home!

ELSIE PETERSON

I'm just worried that we're teaching young people too much too soon these days. Nothing's left to the imagination.

PAUL SANDERS

You're right, it seems everyone's worried about teenagers being too sexualised. But I think that's a different issue to what we do here. I think schools and parents need to work together to give young people important information about their bodies. Not to mention learning how to negotiate intimate relationships in an ethical way. There's not enough of that these days in my opinion.

(Looks at watch)

Gosh, look at the time! Great chatting, but I have to go to my next class. Perhaps I should ask my year 9s what they think about it all.

ELSIE PETERSON

I can just imagine what that lot would say. That's exactly what I'm worried about!

(PAUL SANDERS departs)

OZNUR BAKIR

I have to say I agree with Paul. I wish I had more information when I was younger. When I got my first period, I thought I was dying. My mother never told me anything about my body or sexual relationships. I made sure to teach my daughters about their periods and that they don't have to get married unless they want to. I don't even assume they're straight.

ELSIE PETERSON

But aren't you concerned about them learning about gays and lesbians? I mean, you don't want to encourage it do you? How would you explain that to their grandparents?

OZNUR BAKIR

My parents are quite religious and it's true they wouldn't be happy if one of my children was lesbian or transgender. But if they really loved their grandkids, they'd have to accept it. Just as we should accept diversity at school. It's our duty of care to support all kids to reach their full potential. Anyhow, I don't think educating young people about diverse genders and sexualities turns them gay, or lesbian or transgender for that matter.

(ZOE KOSTAS walks into the staff room.)

ZOE KOSTAS

Looks like I walked in at just the right time. I'm with you, Ozgur. The research shows that teaching young people about sexuality and sexual health at school has important benefits. If we don't educate them early, we leave them open to abuse, exploitation, unplanned pregnancy and STIs<sup>1</sup>. Of course, they should also feel comfortable and informed about their gender and sexuality. They need to know how to manage themselves in relationships regardless of who they choose to be with.

ELSIE PETERSON

All this gender and sexual diversity stuff is a bit worrying. In my day, girls just tried to avoid pregnancy, but now it's STIs, HPV<sup>2</sup>, HIV<sup>3</sup>, AIDS<sup>4</sup>, date rape - the list goes on.

ZOE KOSTAS

Well, sexual and gender based violence has always been around but we just talk about it more now. What worries me is that we teach young people about the risks associated with sexual health and sexuality and never about the pleasures. It could help them to manage their desires in respectful and ethical ways.

ANTHONY BISHARA

Well you better come and teach my sexual health classes because I'm not going there with pleasure, that's for sure. Hopefully my students won't need to deal with any of it until they're married anyway!

ZOE KOSTAS

I don't think that will help a lot of your students, Anthony. Fact is that many people have their first sexual encounter in adolescence and most of them aren't even thinking about marriage at that stage. Besides some of them can't even get married in Australia even if they wanted to!

LIN KEY

Hey Zoe, maybe you should run an in-service with the staff about these issues. It sounds like you're up with best practice around sexualities education and sexual health. I'm happy to put this forward to the Principal and see what his thoughts are. Also maybe we could open it up to parents?

---

<sup>1</sup> Sexually Transmitted Infections

<sup>2</sup> Human papillomavirus

<sup>3</sup> Human Immunodeficiency Virus infection

<sup>4</sup> Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

ZOE KOSTAS

Sure, I'd like to run an in-service. But I'm not convinced having parents and teachers together is the best idea. They both have different issues they need to deal with. I'm happy to do a separate workshop with parents though.

ANTHONY BISHARA

Yeah, I could really do with some tips on dealing with some of the tougher questions around sexual health. I overheard some boys asking why they're having the HPV vaccination when they can't get cervical cancer. I didn't know how to bring it up so I was going to get the immunisation nurse to teach them about the link between HPV and different cancers

ZOE KOSTAS

Ok I can build that kind of information into the in-service along with gender and sexuality diversity. If there's anything else you want a resource on just let me know.

ELSIE PETERSEN

I've got a question already. Do gay students have to worry about getting the HPV vaccination?

(END OF SCENE)

ACT I  
SCENE 3

SETTING                      ZOE KOSTAS'S PDHPE class. Students are sitting at their desks and talking. The teacher's table has a laptop on it and a large screen hangs on the front wall.

(ZOE enters the room)

  ZOE KOSTAS  
OK, quiet everyone! Good morning! I hope you all had a good weekend.

  JAY BENGA  
Sure did miss!

  ZOE KOSTAS  
Last week we were talking about ethical relationships. Who can tell me something they learnt?

  AMANDA JOHNSON  
I know! Consent.

  ZOE KOSTAS  
OK, good. What did we say about consent?

  AMANDA JOHNSON  
That it's really important in relationships.

  ZOE KOSTAS  
Great, thanks Amanda. Negotiating consent is central to all ethical relationships. Can anyone add to that?

  MATTHEW NYUGEN  
Uh yeah. It's also like gender and power comes into it as well. Like some boys use their power to get girls to do things they don't always want to do.

  ZOE KOSTAS  
Ok so why might some girls feel pressured by boys to do things they don't feel comfortable with?

  SONIA CAMPISI  
Well the boy might be bigger than her. Or she might be scared of losing him as her boyfriend, or something like that.

  ZOE KOSTAS

Ok good. Is it just girls who can feel pressured? Or can boys feel pressured too?

DAN PEARSON

Yeah, boys can definitely feel pressured by their mates to do things they wouldn't do if they were on their own.

ZOE KOSTAS

Thanks Dan. Yes, some boys think they have to show their masculinity in dominant ways so they're accepted. Why do you think that is?

JAY BENGA

So people don't think they're gay!

ZOE KOSTAS

That's a good point, Jay. It also leads into what we're going to talk about today.

(ZOE KOSTAS walks to her computer and projects a picture onto the screen. The class laughs. The picture shows two dogs, posed as a couple. One is a large bulldog, dressed in a suit, with a shirt and tie and a man's hat; the other is a small white fluffy dog in a brightly coloured dress and a wedding veil. Zoe Kostas turns to the class.)

ZOE KOSTAS

OK, is one of these dogs a male?

MATTHEW NYUGEN

Yeah, the bulldog on the left!

(Class agrees)

ZOE KOSTAS

And why do you think that?

AMANDA JOHNSON

Because it's ugly!

(Class laughs)

ZOE KOSTAS

(Smiling)

OK, are there any other reasons?

MATTHEW NYUGEN

It's bigger and tougher. And it's more aggressive looking. And it's wearing a suit!

ZOE KOSTAS

OK, so what about the other dog?

MATTHEW NYUGEN

It's female cause it's cute, fluffy and wearing a dress.

LAUREN MIGGINS

But hang on, we're just using the clothes to decide whether they're male or female.

DAN PEARSON

Yeah but it's not just the clothes. The bulldog looks more aggressive, tougher and bigger. The other dog has more female characteristics and looks friendly.

ZOE KOSTAS

So what are the assumptions we're making here? Let's think about some of the words. We're describing the male dog as big, tough, ugly and aggressive. The dog we think is female is small, soft, cute and friendly. What are the differences here?

LAUREN MIGGINS

The female is described in the opposite way to the male.

DAN PEARSON

And they're both stereotypes.

ZOE KOSTAS

Using opposite words to describe males and females in this way is called binary thinking. The same process happens with other binaries like black and white, old and young, east and west. Can you think of any others?

LAUREN MIGGINS

Straight and gay.

ZOE KOSTAS

Yes Lauren, that's another very good example of binary thinking.

Let's talk a bit more about male and female binary thinking. Can the words used to describe females also be used to describe males?

DAN PEARSON

Yes of course, males can be soft, small and cute!

JAY BENGA

Is that your type, Dan?

DAN PEARSON

(Ignores JAY'S comment)

I know some females that are big, tough and aggressive.

MATTHEW NYUGEN

And males and females can show some of the same characteristics, Miss.

ZOE KOSTAS

Is that acceptable?

JAY BENGA

No, it's not good if a guy is seen to be soft or 'girly'.

(END OF SCENE)



ACT I  
SCENE 4

SETTING                    ANTHONY BISHARA'S Year 9 PE class is  
                                 playing touch football on the oval.  
                                 The teams are mixed gender.

(JAY BENGA has possession of the ball and is  
                                 sprinting towards the try line.)

JAY BENGA

Get your gay arse out of my way, Pearson!

(JAY moves to the right, trying to avoid DAN, who  
                                 is moving in on him quickly DAN outruns JAY and  
                                 grabs his shoulder.)

DAN PEARSON

You're gonna have to run faster than that, Jay!

(STANLEY PETERS runs up behind Dan and Jay and  
                                 stands very close to Dan, looking into his face.)

STANLEY PETERS

Get your hands off him, poofter!

(STANLEY grabs DAN'S shirt and pulls him away  
                                 from JAY. DAN'S shirt tears)

(LINDA O'SHEA overhears the conversation and  
                                 walks over to stand beside DAN)

LINDA O'SHEA

(To JAY and STANLEY)

Back off! You're both bloody homophobes.

STANLEY PETERS

Why are you sticking up for him? You won't be able to get into  
his pants - you're not his type.

(Looks at JAY and smirks)

LINDA O'SHEA

Don't be so immature Stanley!

JAY BENGA

Quit being such a fag hag Linda.

LINDA O'SHEA

If that means I support the rights of gays, then yeah, I'm a

fag hag. You and Stanley are as bad as each other. It's not funny or cool!

STANLEY PETERS

(To Linda)

You're really up yourself, aren't you?

LINDA O'SHEA

This isn't about me!

(ANTHONY BISHARA, who has been listening from the sidelines, walks towards the commotion on the field.)

ANTHONY BISHARA

OK you lot, that's enough. Get on with the game or I'll sideline you.

(JAY and STANLEY run back to the game and ANTHONY BISHARA returns to the side to continue refereeing.)

DAN PEARSON

(Turns to LINDA)

Thanks for the support.

LINDA O'SHEA

Don't mention it. They're dickheads.

(The game finishes. The students walk off the field towards the four change rooms, which are segregated by sex with traditional signage on the doors - two male and two female. The boys file into one of the male change rooms JAY BENGA walks behind DAN as they enter.)

JAY BENGA

(Leans forward and whispers in DAN'S ear)

Hey, faggot!

(DAN ignores JAY and stops in front of his locker.)

JUSTIN CAMPBELL

(JUSTIN keeps walking towards the back of the change room, leaning close to DAN as he passes.)

Hey poofter!

STANLEY PETERS

(STANLEY laughs and bumps his shoulder into DAN as he walks past.)

Whoops!

DAN PEARSON

(Quickly recovers his balance and calls out)  
Piss off! At least I'm honest about who I am, which is more than what some of you can say!

(Looks at JAY)

(DAN begins changing from his sports clothes back into his school uniform. The other boys turn towards him and cat-whistle loudly. ANTHONY BISHARA is standing outside, overhears the noise and walks over to the entrance to the boys change room.)

ANTHONY BISHARA

Okay you guys, quieten down and hurry up. We don't have all day. You need to get to your next class.

(The noise dies down and the boys shower, get changed and walk out. They don't take much notice of DAN, except for some sideways glances. DAN is the last to leave. ANTHONY BISHARA is waiting by the entrance.)

ANTHONY BISHARA

Dan, can I see you please?

(Dan walks over)

From now on, I think it's best if you get changed in a separate change room on your own. This commotion can't keep going on.

DAN PEARSON

What! No way! I didn't start any of this.

ANTHONY BISHARA

I don't care who started it, Dan. And anyway some of the boys have complained you're watching them in the shower and I don't want things to get out of hand.

DAN PEARSON

What! Are you serious? I'm not checking them out! If you make me go to the other change room it'll make things worse.

ANTHONY BISHARA

Just do what I say. It is for the best, Dan. If you want, I can get you a pass out of sport. Maybe you could take a different class instead?

DAN PEARSON

That's not fair, Sir. I love sport. Why should I get punished for their behaviour?

ANTHONY BISHARA

Listen, Dan. You will either use the other change room or start doing another subject. That's final. Now get to your next class.

(DAN exits, looking upset and angry.)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT I  
SCENE 5

SETTING                   The playground at lunchtime at Treetop Hills High School. Some students are playing handball or netball and others are playing football in the distance. Many students are sitting in friendship groups eating their lunch.

(DAN PEARSON and LAUREN MIGGINS are sitting with each other.)

DAN PEARSON

Hey Lauren are you okay? You don't look real good.

LAUREN MIGGINS

Yeah I'm okay, considering.

DAN PEARSON

Considering what?

LAUREN MIGGINS

Well, considering my girlfriend wants to be my boyfriend.

DAN PEARSON

What do you mean?

LAUREN MIGGINS

He's transgender. He's so unhappy cause he goes to an all girls' school and has to wear a dress. He wants to come to our school and wear the boys' uniform but can't cause his parents won't let him. And I'm just confused cause I thought I was a lesbian and I was thinking of coming out to my parents but now I'm not sure what I am.

DAN PEARSON

That sucks Lauren but I don't know if there's anything I can say to help?

LAUREN MIGGINS

It's fine. I don't really want to talk about it. What's happening with you?

DAN PEARSON

I just had the worst PE lesson.

LAUREN MIGGINS

Why? What happened?

DAN PEARSON

Oh you know same homophobic crap.

LAUREN MIGGINS

Seriously? I've been telling Jess how cool this school is! But then, I'm not out to everyone yet. So maybe it's not.

DAN PEARSON

Well yeah I guess it depends. You know Jay Benga?

LAUREN MIGGINS

Yeah, isn't he going out with Ali?

DAN PEARSON

Yeah, they're hooking up. But it's complicated. Anyway, we were playing touch footy and Jay and a few of his mates were just being dickheads, like calling me 'faggot' and 'sissy' and 'poofter' and Mr. Bishara was useless. He could hear it all but he did NOTHING. But you know who did say something?

LAUREN MIGGINS

Who?

DAN PEARSON

Linda. She's such a little social justice campaigner. It was good of her to stand up to them.

LAUREN MIGGINS

Yeah Linda's cool. Isn't she part of that 'Wear it Purple' anti-bullying campaign? And she's straight too which makes me think there's hope for all of us if people like her are prepared to stick up for people like you and me.

DAN PEARSON

Yeah she definitely saved my arse today. But I could've done with her support in the boys' change room too, when Jay and the others were calling me names and shoving me around. When I left, Mr Bishara asked me to use a separate change room next time. Apparently it's...

(Makes air quotes with his fingers)

...'for my own safety'.

LAUREN MIGGINS

You're kidding! That's crap.

DAN PEARSON

What pisses me off is that he could've punished them but instead, I'm the one getting the blame! And he thinks I'm

perving on the other guys - as if!

LAUREN MIGGINS

That's so bad. I wonder if the other girls say the same about me? When I'm in the girls' change rooms after PE, I'm so careful not to make eye contact with anyone. I'm already worried that they think I'm a lesbian.

(DAN'S phone buzzes with a text message. He reads it. LAUREN looks at him with curiosity.)

Who's that from?

DAN PEARSON

Oh man! Jay just texted me apologising for calling me a 'fag'. And he sent me a picture of himself.

LAUREN MIGGINS

Are you serious? Show me!

(DAN shows LAUREN the picture on his phone.)

What the hell. How, how did he get your number? And why did he send you a half-naked picture of himself!

DAN PEARSON

(Looks sheepish)

Well, I've kinda been seeing him.

LAUREN MIGGINS

What do you mean, kinda been seeing him? He's straight isn't he? What about Ali?

DAN PEARSON

Well, he's still seeing her. But I think he likes me too.

LAUREN MIGGINS

Dan, I can't believe you're seeing this guy. He's such a homophobe!

DAN PEARSON

Yeah but he's just doing that whole macho thing on the football field and in front of the other guys.

LAUREN MIGGINS

Yeah but it's not okay. You have to speak to him about cutting it out! If you guys have a thing then he's not doing himself any favours with all that internalized homophobia! Jess went through a similar thing where we had to work through a few issues he had about his gender. But what are you going to do about Jay? It's not right that he treats you that way at school but then he's all over you in private. And it's not

fair what he's doing to Ali. Are they going to break up?

DAN PEARSON

I guess I should talk to him. You're right, it isn't fair. Maybe I could threaten to post this picture of him on Facebook or something?

LAUREN MIGGINS

I don't think you should do that, even if he is a wanker.

DAN PEARSON

Yeah but it would mean he could no longer talk crap about me.

LAUREN MIGGINS

Yeah but it's not right Dan, you're better than that. You shouldn't post his picture anywhere without his consent.

DAN PEARSON

Yeah but the problem is, he doesn't think he's gay or bi or whatever. Clearly he's attracted to the same sex, at least some of the time but he reckons he's straight. I don't know how people can be like that...

LAUREN MIGGINS

Yeah well after my experiences, I think anything's possible. But you need to get this change room situation sorted. Could you talk to your mum? She seems cool. She's involved in PFLAG<sup>5</sup>, hey?

DAN PEARSON

Yeah she is a massive activist for gay rights and she's amazing around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues too. She's already dealt with racism at school so I'm sure she'll have something to say about homophobia as well.

LAUREN MIGGINS

Maybe your mum could raise it at parent-teacher night? I'm really worried because I want Mum and Dad to help Jess move schools but I haven't come out to them yet. And I don't know to explain that I'm lesbian but I'm going out with someone who identifies as a male. It's all so confusing.

DAN PEARSON

I could always ask my mum to speak to your parents? Or maybe you don't need to come out. You could just tell them Jess is a friend...

LAUREN MIGGINS

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<sup>5</sup> Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays



That's OK, I'll figure it out. Thanks though Dan. Good luck with your parent-teacher night, looks like we both need it.

(END OF SCENE)

ACT I  
SCENE 6

SETTING                   The school hall at Treetop Hills High School is abuzz with parents and guardians, teachers and students. There are two small tables, each with four chairs arranged so that parents and guardians sit with their child on one side and the teacher is on the other.

(NOLA PEARSON and DAN PEARSON walk over to ANTHONY BISHARA'S table.)

DAN PEARSON

Hi Mr Bishara.

ANTHONY BISHARA

Good to see you, Dan. Nola, welcome! Please take a seat.

NOLA PEARSON

Glad to finally meet you, Anthony. Dan talks about PE a lot.

ANTHONY BISHARA

Yes well Dan is a very good football player. He's a great asset to the school.

NOLA PEARSON

He is indeed. I'm very proud of him. Seems he's taking after his uncle...

ANTHONY BISHARA

Yes, maybe you'll play professionally one day too, Dan! But it seems you're throwing yourself into sport on the field but you've been very quiet in class over the last few weeks. It's all right, overall you're doing well in both PE and Health classes but we just need to get you contributing more to discussions.

NOLA PEARSON

I'm concerned about some bullying that's going on at school and in his PE class. I'm sure it's homophobia and, as you can imagine, I'm not happy about it. Can you tell me more about your approach to handling matters like this in the classroom and on the football field?

ANTHONY BISHARA

Well, I'm sorry to hear about that. Sometimes it can get tough out there on the field, and it's good to let the team work it out. It's character building. And it means students get to learn resilience and team-work.

NOLA PEARSON

What, putting up with homophobia is character building?

ANTHONY BISHARA

Well, that's not exactly what I meant.

NOLA PEARSON

I'm afraid I disagree with your approach, Mr Bishara. You know, I've had to address racism at this school, especially anti-Aboriginal sentiment. The Principal took it very seriously and was careful about integrating thoughtfully worded policies around issues of race and ethnicity. I'm sure that if you heard racist slurs being yelled out on the football field, you'd intervene. I expect the same kind of intervention from a supervising teacher when derogatory comments are directed at my boy about his sexuality.

ANTHONY BISHARA

I understand and I agree. Racism is not acceptable. And homophobia is not okay either. With the incident we are talking about another student intervened on the field and I thought this was better than me saying anything. I thought they'd listen to their peers more than to me.

DAN PEARSON

Sir, it's just...if you had stopped them, they would've been less likely to do it again. What Linda did was great, and she did the best she could. But, if you had just said something, then that other stuff in the change room might not have happened.

ANTHONY BASHIRA

I'm sorry Dan. You should have spoken up. I didn't realise it was affecting you so much.

NOLA PEARSON

It's tough for Dan to have these conversations with you, or with anyone. And, it's even tougher for him to negotiate homophobic bullying with his classmates.

ANTHONY BASHIRA

I understand. I should've stepped in.

DAN PEARSON

It's just I'm really worried about missing out on sport classes now. I know other kids would be happy to get out of PE

but it's one of my favourite subjects.

NOLA PEARSON

Dan shouldn't have to be excluded from sport because of the discriminatory behaviour of other students. What policies and practices does the school have to address this kind of bullying and violence?

ANTHONY BISHARA

Well, we have an anti-bullying policy.

NOLA PEARSON

I've seen that policy and I know it doesn't mention homophobic or transphobic violence and harassment. You know, if you include that language in your policy, it signals to students and to staff that this kind of behaviour is not okay.

ANTHONY BISHARA

I think we can probably do something about that. It would be great to have your input, Nola. Perhaps we can organise an action plan and follow-up meeting. I'll speak to the Principal then get back to you.

NOLA PEARSON

I'm happy to help out. I'm a co-convenor of a support group called Parents and Friends of Lesbian and Gays, or PFLAG. So I've had experience with helping schools deal with homophobia and transphobia. This is important to my son and me, Anthony. This is Dan's third school now. He's had to deal with racism and homophobia before. He deserves the school's full support and I don't want him dropping out of school like other kids in the same situation.

(GEOFF, ALISON and LAUREN MIGGINS enter the hall and walk over to the desk where ZOE KOSTAS is sitting.)

ZOE KOSTAS

Hi Geoff and Alison. Welcome to parent-teacher night - it's great to meet you both. Good to see you, Lauren. Please sit down.

GEOFF MIGGINS

Good to meet you too. We've heard great things about you from Lauren.

ZOE KOSTAS

Oh, that's good to hear. She's a very good student so that makes my job easy. Lauren has achieved good results in her most recent Health exam and always makes a solid effort in her PE class. She's a good tennis player too.

ALISON MIGGINS

Zoe and I used to play tennis every weekend, didn't we Zoe? But she's been busy with study and friends lately so we haven't got out as much as usual. I'm so glad to hear she's doing well in her exams. What topic comes next?

ZOE KOSTAS

We've just started a new topic area covering relationships and sexuality education. We'll also be covering sexual health and decision-making. I completed my Masters in Sexual Health recently, so I'm keen to implement the really interesting things that I learned. We'll also be holding some professional development sessions for our teachers around some of these issues.

GEOFF MIGGINS

Well, I'm glad it's you and not me! It must be difficult stuff to teach. Zoe and her mum have had some of those chats, haven't you girls? I'm fully supportive, but I prefer to keep out of it.

ZOE KOSTAS

Most young people speak to their friends about these things, and most of them use the Internet and social media to find out information, as well as television and magazines. But not all the information is reliable, so it's good for them to have some guidance from their family.

ALISON MIGGINS

Yes well we've had lots of chats about sex education, haven't we Lauren? I was pregnant with Lauren's sister when Lauren was four, so we talked a lot about making babies and child-birth when she was young. Later we talked about periods, and I guess we'll be talking about boyfriends soon.

GEOFF MIGGINS

Well as I always say, there's time for boyfriends later!

(To LAUREN)

Study should come first, shouldn't it, sweetie?

LAUREN MIGGINS

Dad, how embarrassing! Lots of people in my class have boyfriends and girlfriends and study hard. It doesn't have to be one or the other.

ALISON MIGGINS

Your father has a point. It's fine to have a nice friendship, as long as study comes first.

LAUREN MIGGINS

I guess I already do have a nice friendship. With Jess.

GEOFF MIGGINS

Why haven't we met this young man yet? Does he go to Treetops as well?

LAUREN MIGGINS

Jess could be a boy's name or a girl's name Dad.

ALISON MIGGINS

(Glances at GEOFF and looks confused.)

So is Jess a boy or a girl?

LAUREN MIGGINS

Jess was born a girl... but is becoming a boy.

ALISON MIGGINS

Lauren, what do you mean? I don't understand what you're trying to say.

ZOE KOSTAS

I don't want to interfere here, but maybe I can help. Lauren, do you mean that Jess is transgender?

LAUREN MIGGINS

Yeah. Jess feels more like a boy than a girl and identifies as a boy. The problem is that he goes to St Pope's and that's a girls' school.

GEOFF MIGGINS

Right, well what do her parents think of this behaviour?

LAUREN MIGGINS

You mean his parents. They're not happy about it.

GEOFF MIGGINS

Well, as the father of a girl, I can understand that it must be hard when your daughter wants to be a boy.

ALISON MIGGINS

You wanted to be a boy when you were little, Lauren. But you grew out of it. Perhaps Jess is still confused.

LAUREN MIGGINS

He's not confused. He knows what he wants and he'll do it regardless of what anyone else thinks! His family doesn't understand. They're always forcing him to behave like a girl when he doesn't want to!

ALISON MIGGINS

Lauren, is Jess more than a friend to you?

LAUREN MIGGINS

Jess is my boyfriend.

GEOFF MIGGINS

What? I can't work all this out!

ALISON MIGGINS

Lauren, darling, does this mean you're gay?

LAUREN MIGGINS

(LAUREN starts to become distressed)

I don't really know what I am!

ZOE KOSTAS

I've worked with other students questioning their gender and sexuality and these issues are complex. If you want more information, I can direct you to some support services. There's also the group Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays - they provide support for families. Perhaps it would be a good idea for you to speak more about this at home.

LAUREN MIGGINS

Thanks Ms. Kostas. But I'm really worried about Jess. He can't stay at that girls' school any longer. He wants to move to this school so he can dress in the boys' uniform.

ZOE KOSTAS

It's very important this situation is resolved. I think Jess needs to speak with his school counselor and ask for help with speaking to his parents about his gender identity. Moving schools is a complex decision that has to be made by Jess, his parents and his current school and it may not be possible. But if the Principal at St Pope's refers Jess to us, I'll talk to our Principal.

LAUREN MIGGINS

Thanks so much, but there's homophobia and probably transphobia here too. So what will happen to Jess if he does transfer here?

ZOE KOSTAS

The school has just committed to dealing with these issues and I'll make sure it's a priority. Let's meet with the Principal in a few weeks when we've reviewed our policies and practices. How does that sound?

ALISON MIGGINS

This is all a bit of a shock. I suspected something was going on, Lauren, but I couldn't have imagined this. You're my daughter and I love you. Your father and I want to support you

through this.

GEOFF MIGGINS

Yes but I think we will need some help in understanding all that's going on.

(END OF SCENE)



ACT I  
SCENE 7

SETTING                      Staff meeting in a classroom at Treetop Hills. Alerted by ZOE KOSTAS and ANTHONY BISHARA, the Principal, DAVID ALLEN, has put gender diversity and sexual orientation on the agenda. DAVID has asked ZOE to share her knowledge and experience about best practice in these areas.

DAVID ALLEN

Good morning everyone. We have a lot to get through, so let's get on. Firstly, I'd like to say that the feedback from families about last week's parent-teacher evening was very positive, so thank you for all your efforts. The main topic on the agenda for this meeting is reviewing how the school addresses gender and sexuality diversity among our students. Anthony Bishara says that Dan Pearson's mother, Nola, is concerned about the harassment her son is experiencing from several male students. She isn't happy about the way the school is handling this situation.

ANTHONY BISHARA

We've done our best, but it's almost impossible to stop this behaviour. Boys will be boys!

ZOE KOSTAS

I don't agree with you, Anthony. There's nothing innate in boys and men that make them tease and harass each other. And we certainly haven't done all we can to deal with it. If teachers don't intervene appropriately, the kids who are on the receiving end think we're endorsing harassment. They end up not trusting anyone in the education system.

DAVID ALLEN

I tend to agree with Zoe. We've tried different strategies in the past, but I believe we need to take a whole-school approach to really make a difference. This includes not just dealing with homophobic and transphobic harassment, but reviewing how we teach sexuality education. I hope we're all on the same page about this - that's why we're having this meeting. I've asked Zoe to facilitate the session as she was involved in a similar process at her previous school. So over to you, Zoe.

ZOE KOSTAS

Thanks, David. Working out the best way to begin taking a whole-school approach is going to take much longer than just one morning meeting. This is only the beginning of a long journey. This morning, I'd like us all to share any concerns and what we think needs to be done to begin this process.

OZNUR BAKIR

I think it's a great idea and I'm all for it. The homophobia among some of our students is terrible. I've overheard some boys - and it's usually boys - calling each other horrible names and saying really derogatory things. And they do the same with girls. I try to intervene, but the boys just say I heard it wrong. I know what I heard, but I can't do anything if the students on the receiving end won't make a complaint.

ZOE KOSTAS

That's typical, Oznur. Victims of this kind of behavior don't usually want to say anything because they think it will make the harassment worse. Unfortunately, in some cases it does. The other reason they don't complain to teachers is because they think we won't do anything about it, and the fact is, sometimes we don't.

ANTHONY BISHARA

You can't be on their backs all the time about this stuff. You wouldn't be doing anything else! Besides, sometimes they bring it on themselves.

LIN KEE

What do you mean by that, Anthony?

ANTHONY BISHARA

Look, I'm not saying that some of our boys don't get carried away, especially on the football field. But sometimes boys like Dan encourage it by their actions. The other boys are just retaliating.

LIN KEE

(Shifting to the front of her seat, looking agitated.)

Through their actions? What? You mean by just existing and being different?

ZOE KOSTAS

OK, I think this issue needs to be discussed in much more depth than we have time for this morning. What we're saying shows that we need to have a session around some of the myths and stereotypes about gender and sexuality, where they come from and who they actually benefit. The students and the rest of us need to be involved. Perhaps this should be an action item for our whole-school approach.

PAUL SANDERS

Absolutely!

ZOE KOSTAS

What other things do we need to think about?

OZNUR BAKIR

Whether our policy around harassment is actually appropriate.

ZOE KOSTAS

Yes, great point - noted.

ELSIE PETERSON

Do we need to include parents' perspectives on what we teach in sex education? And when we review our harassment policy and practices?

ZOE KOSTAS

That's a good question. I think involving parents in such conversations is important. I'll put it on the agenda for our next meeting.

PAUL SANDERS

Hang on, I'm not sure that's a good idea. Some parents can shut down important issues that need to be addressed with kids in sex education. They can be really homophobic and transphobic as well.

OZNUR BAKIR

We'll have to put a strong case forward to them about what we think is necessary and why. Perhaps our parent body could do with an education session too.

LIN KEE

I think that's a great idea Oznur. Maybe one of our parents will help to lead a session.

ZOE KOSTAS

These are all really important suggestions, so thank you. We've got 20 minutes left. I'd like you to get into groups of four and brainstorm any other issues to consider when we're developing our whole-school approach. I'll collect your responses and use them in our next planning session in two weeks' time.

(The teachers form small groups and begin to discuss ideas, which they list on large sheets of paper.)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT I  
SCENE 8

SETTING                      The staff room at Treetop Hills

(The telephone rings and ANTHONY BISHARA  
answers.)

ANTHONY BISHARA  
Treetop Hills High School. How can I help you?

SUSAN TATE  
Good morning. It's Susan Tate here, Principal of St Pope's  
College. Is Zoe Kostas available please?

ANTHONY BISHARA  
I'll just see if I can find her. She should be at her desk.

(Anthony finds Zoe at her desk, informs her that  
the Principal of St Pope's is on the phone. Zoe  
walks over to the phone in the staff room.)

ZOE KOSTAS  
Good morning, Susan. Good to hear from you. David Allen said  
you'd be in touch.

SUSAN TATE  
Yes, I'm contacting you about Jess Wong. David mentioned that  
you'd just been made Head of Welfare, and that you'd be the  
best contact person to speak with about Jess's integration  
into Treetop Hills.

ZOE KOSTAS  
Yes, that's right. David said the meetings with Jess, your  
school counsellor and Jess's parents were challenging, but  
you'd done a great job with prioritising Jess's welfare and  
organising support for his parents.

SUSAN TATE  
It was quite hard. I haven't had to deal with any issues like  
this before so it's been a steep learning curve for me and the  
other staff involved. We're sorry to be losing a good student,  
of course, but it's obvious we're not in a position to  
accommodate Jess's needs. Both the parents have started to  
come around though, and Jess is feeling more positive about  
staying at home. So I think it's going to be okay, especially  
with the ongoing support being offered to Jess and the family.

ZOE KOSTAS

That's great. We're currently reviewing our policies and practices around transphobia and homophobia so we can have a whole-school approach. We want to make sure we're up to date with best practice. What sort of approach do you have at St Pope's?

SUSAN TATE

I'm looking into organising professional development for my staff. We've had to address homophobia before, but never any complexities around gender. We need to educate the students too, but I don't want to upset our parents by taking it too far. 'Justice' is our school motto, so I thought I could use that to promote the idea to the school community.

ZOE KOSTAS

That's a good idea. We're doing some professional development with teachers and school staff this week too. I've also organised some guest speakers from key support services. And a couple of students have set up an Ally program so everyone can be engaged with the issues regardless of their own identities. The Ally program links in with Wear it Purple, which is a great initiative too.

SUSAN TATE

I've heard of the Ally program at other schools and universities. I'll look into that initiative for St Pope's. What's Wear it Purple? I'm not familiar with it.

ZOE KOSTAS

It raises awareness about the issues faced by young people who identify as sexuality or gender diverse and how we need to eradicate the associated bullying and violence. It's powerful because it's led by students, rather than schools telling young people what to do.

SUSAN TATE

I must let my students know about that. I've learned a lot over the past few weeks and apparently some of the most successful messages and campaigns around these issues are student-led. They can literally save lives. I've been reading how gender and sexuality diverse young people are much more likely to experience mental health problems and to consider self-harm or suicide because of homophobia and transphobia. My next challenge is to tackle homophobia and transphobia at St Pope's. We've been acting like it doesn't exist here, but now I know it does and in all schools. But it's not always obvious until you look.

ZOE KOSTAS

That's so true. I'm glad we've been able to work with St

Pope's to ensure the best outcome for Jess. I hate to think how things would have turned out if we hadn't. I guess sometimes we can learn from our students instead of the other way round!

(END OF PLAY)

# Critical Questions

The following suggested questions are a good starting point for a discussion about the critical issues arising from *Working It Out*. The facilitator may wish to develop additional questions from the resulting conversations.

## GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What are the main issues you can identify in this play?
2. What are the specific issues facing transgender or gender diverse people in schools?
3. As an educator, what would you (or do you) find most challenging and rewarding about working with gender and sexuality diverse young people?

## ACT 1, SCENE 1 (Lauren and Jess meet before school)

1. What are some of the complex issues that Lauren and Jess are negotiating around their identities?
2. How might using a gender diverse student's preferred name and pronoun support their inclusion in the school environment?
3. How could you support a student's peers and staff members to use a student's preferred name and pronoun?
4. What issues are Lauren and Jess negotiating around relationships with their families?
5. How might this impact on their schooling?

## ACT 1, SCENE 2 (Staff room discussion)

1. What are some of the issues raised about sex education in schooling?
2. Identify the intersections between gender, sexuality and ethnicity that are raised in this scene.
3. How might you negotiate these intersections respectfully within a school community?
4. How might you effectively negotiate the tensions between religious beliefs and inclusion of gender and sexuality diverse people in schooling contexts?
5. What strategies could you or your school employ to implement respectful inclusion of gender and sexuality diverse people in religiously affiliated schools?

## ACT 1, SCENE 3 (Zoe Costas's PDHPE class)

1. What is binary thinking?
2. Describe the ways in which the logic behind binary thinking reinforces power relations.
3. How does binary thinking around gender and sexuality operate in the curriculum and in schools more generally?

4. What are some of the tensions you might encounter teaching inclusive, or comprehensive, sex education in schools?
5. What strategies might you use to effectively negotiate these tensions?

#### **ACT 1, SCENE 4 (Dan Pearson is bullied)**

1. How would you effectively intervene in the homophobia experienced by Dan Pearson?
2. How comfortable would you feel intervening in this situation?
3. What skills would you need to effectively intervene in situations where students are being homophobic or transphobic?

#### **ACT 1, SCENE 5 (Dan Pearson talks to Lauren Miggins about being bullied)**

1. This scene discusses the internalised homophobia experienced by Jay Benga and its impact on his relationship with Dan Pearson. How do gender and sexuality labels impact on some young people?
2. Why do you think that change rooms and toilets in schools are difficult sites for some young people to negotiate?
3. How might you and your school address the concerns that some young people face in these environments?

#### **ACT 1, SCENE 6 (Parent-teacher night)**

1. What concerns might parents have about the schooling experiences of their gender and sexuality diverse children?
2. How might schools work effectively with parents, guardians and carers to extend schools' equity and anti-discrimination policies and practices, especially around homophobia and transphobia?
3. How can schools support the needs of families with gender and sexuality diverse children?
4. As a teacher, how would you have handled Lauren's 'coming out' to her parents?

#### **ACT 1, SCENE 7 (Zoe Kostas interacts with other staff at a special meeting)**

1. How might you approach speaking with a colleague who uses homophobic/transphobic language?
2. What would you do if you hold personal views that are contrary to inclusive policies in a school? How might you negotiate the tensions between your personal values and viewpoints and inclusive school policies?

#### **ACT 1, SCENE 8 (Zoe Kostas talks to Susan Tate about Jess's relocation)**



1. How do you think St Pope's would handle the inclusion of a gender diverse or male to female transgender student?
2. How would you and your school handle this situation if you were located in a single sex school?
3. How would you and your school handle this situation if you were located in a co-educational school?